

had suspected it to be from its elytral colouration. Mr. Allen (in litt.) stated that he had not previously seen a similarly coloured individual of this species.

It is perhaps worth drawing attention to the fact that Mohr in "Die Käfer Mitteleuropas" (1966, vol. 9: 164) considers *menthastri* as merely an entirely green large variety of *Chrysolina herbacea* Duftschmid, the latter insect being described as green, copper coloured, blue-violet, or black with a blue shine. — D. R. NASH, 266 Colchester Road, Lawford, Manningtree, Essex.

[Mr. Nash's specimen is certainly highly unusual for Britain; on the Continent the members of this genus tend to be very much more variable in colour. The insect under notice would appear further to be something of a sculptural abnormality, and presumably the two aspects are due to the same cause or are linked in some way.

It is worth noting that though Mohr (*l.c.*) gives the same length for *C. graminis* and *C. menthastri* (or *herbacea* v. *menthastri*), the British races differ in this respect, *graminis* being obviously the larger on average with the males more elongate. I find also a character additional to those given in the literature to separate these species, viz., that in *graminis* the hind tibiae are distinctly sinuate towards apex on their outer margin, where they bend slightly outwards, whereas in *menthastri* they are practically straight in the apical half or even curve a little inwards. — A.A.A.]

AN ALTERNATIVE LARVAL FOODPLANT OF THE WHITE LETTER HAIRSTREAK (*STRYMONIDIA w-ALBUM* KNOCH. — In early March 1978, a single *S. w-album* ovum was found on blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) while searching for *S. pruni* ova in Oxfordshire. This ovum was laid on a terminal twig about three metres above ground level, the bush being at the edge of an extensive blackthorn thicket.

The resulting larva fed on blackthorn blossoms thereafter and almost completely ignored the leaves which were also available. It duly pupated and produced a typical female some weeks later. Several days passed after I had noticed the empty ovum before the minute larva was located. In the first instar and for part of the second, the larva concealed itself within the blossoms when feeding. During this period, the only time I saw the larva was when it left the blossom buds to complete the first ecdysis. The larva spun a pad of silk on a nearby twig and remained there until the moult was completed. As the larva grew in size, the feeding method was changed. Only the head and first few segments were able to enter the blossoms, the larva resting on the twigs between feeding sessions. This pattern of feeding was similar to that used by some *w-album* larvae I had reared on wych elm in the past. These larvae also entered the blossoms immediately after hatching, transferring to the leaves when half grown.

This interesting observation may provide a clue for those who, like myself, have considered the fate of *w-album* now

that the usual foodplant has disappeared from much of the countryside. It is possible that *w-album* uses blackthorn occasionally as an alternative to elm. This may explain the sightings of unidentified hairstreaks seen flying around blackthorn in areas well outside the normal distribution of *S. pruni* (cf. Symes, *Ent. Rec.*, 80: 40). One thing which could undermine this theory is that blackthorn is one of the most frequently beaten shrubs by those collectors who use this method to obtain larvae. With this in mind, I have made enquiries but have not been able to find a single instance of *w-album* larvae being beaten from blackthorn. If anyone does know of an instance, then I shall be glad to hear from them. On the other hand, the use of blackthorn could simply be a more recent trend resulting from the disappearance of the usual foodplant.

In Gloucestershire, *w-album* had a population explosion in the fine summers of 1975 and 1976. The butterfly was more widespread and numerous than I have ever seen it anywhere before. Ova were very easy to locate on those elms which were still disease free. In 1977, several fully fed larvae were observed seeking pupation sites and I looked forward to seeing imagines around their favourite trees later. This was not to be, as in contrast to the two previous summers, only two were seen. 1978 was even worse, I saw one pupa and no imagines on the few remaining elms. A gloomy picture and observers in other parts of the country have made similar reports. Time will show if *w-album* can continue to be a member of our countryside by using alternative foodplants. — JOHN McFEELY, 90 Stonechat Avenue, Heron Park, Gloucester.

*THERA JUNIPERATA* L. (JUNIPER CARPET) IN WARWICKSHIRE.— Among some moths sent to me for identification was an example of *Thera juniperata* L. taken by Mr. Alan Garner at a lighted window near Nuneaton on 8th October 1978. Another was seen two days later. There is no juniper in the area, so either this was a dispersal flight — the wind was southerly at the time — or possibly this species is beginning to establish itself locally on garden conifers, as *Eupithecia pusillata* (D. & S.) does so readily.

It is perhaps worthy of note that on 11th October 1963 I found a Juniper Carpet on a tree trunk in the town of Rugby; I assumed it had bred on *Cupressus* growing in a nearby cemetery. Both this and the Nuneaton example are of the southern form, not as dark as specimens I have bred from North Lancashire.— R. G. WARREN, Wood Ridings, 32 Whitmore Road, Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent.

*DANAUS CHRYSIPPUS* L. IN MALTA.— During a bird ringing session of the Ornithological Society, at Xemxija, St. Paul's Bay on the 14th October 1978, at approximately 8.30 a.m. a friend called out saying he had just seen a strange butterfly flying amongst the vegetation. I was soon on the spot and to my surprise I saw a very rare species of butterfly for the Maltese Islands, the *Danaus chrysippus* L. I had no net with me, and all I could do was to throw a light jacket onto it, and luckily